



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0529**

August 10, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer  
House Majority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-107 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim Clyburn  
House Majority Whip  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-329 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, and Whip Clyburn:

As members of the Democratic Party, we have a moral responsibility to defend the voiceless in America. Our legislative inaction is literally the difference between life and death for communities of color. Especially for immigrants, blue-collar workers, and low-income families. Therefore, I urge Congressional Leadership to prioritize the needs of communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic – specifically Latino, Black, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans – in the next relief package.

Under your leadership, we passed the historic \$2 trillion CARES Act. While this action benefited many Americans, more must be done to protect and support communities of color. Moreover, Senate Republicans jammed through nearly \$174 billion in tax breaks for big companies and wealthy individuals earning more than \$1 million. Let's be clear: these tax breaks were nothing more than a gift to President Trump, the Republicans, and their rich friends. This was yet another legislative example of the rich getting richer off the backs of low-income, hardworking Americans.

Following the passage of the CARES Act, reports of misuse of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and inexplicable application denials for struggling small businesses have come to light. Big corporations like Ruth's Chris Steak House and Shake Shack received \$20 million and \$10 million loans respectively. They were part of the 0.25 percent of the 1.66 million applicants that received more than \$5 million while thousands of other applicants – mostly people of color – were being denied much smaller loans of under \$200,000. According to a study released in May by the Center for Responsible Lending, 95% of Black-owned businesses, 91% of Latino and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander -owned businesses, and 75% of Asian-owned businesses had virtually no

chance of receiving a PPP loan because of a lack of credit and access to banks. These businesses are often in communities of color, have workers from the community, and if they close will have a negative impact on our communities. PPP loans should be expanded to reach these underserved communities and these businesses should have access to the technical assistance necessary in order to qualify for the program.

In addition to these flaws, one of the biggest problems in the last coronavirus response package was the lack of appropriated funds for communities hit the hardest by the pandemic. Historically, communities of color are often not seen as a priority or left out of the conversation entirely during national emergencies. Unfortunately, this continues to be the case, even though COVID-19 is affecting – and killing – people of color at a disproportionately high rate compared to white Americans.

The Latino, Black, Indigenous, and Asian communities are dying from COVID-19 because often these communities due to employment and other factors are often the most likely to be exposed to the virus. Whether working outdoors in agriculture, indoors in meatpacking plants, or in a range of in-person service-focused industries. In addition, years of inadequate access to health care and other necessary services in these communities have resulted in co-morbidities that are now having devastating outcomes. These communities need additional protections from coast to coast. In Washington, Latinos make up 13% of the population, yet were 30% of the reported COVID-19 cases in the state. In Georgia, African Americans comprise 30% of the population but were 40% of the state's confirmed COVID-19 cases. In Los Angeles County, Pacific Islanders suffer the highest infection rate of any racial or ethnic group, more than 2,500 per 100,000 residents. That's six times higher than for white people. In Arizona, Native Americans/Indigenous communities have the highest death-to-population ratio of any racial or ethnic group. Additionally, an overwhelming number of the nearly 30 million Americans who are newly unemployed are working-class people of color. Most of the essential workers who are forced to continue to work in environments that place them at a high risk of exposure to the virus are also disproportionately from communities of color. It is a double-edged sword that is tearing through districts like mine, and the pain is real and unrelenting.

We cannot continue to allow Senate Republicans to relegate people of color to the back of the bus. Democrats must stand strong against Mitch McConnell and the Trump Administration and pass legislation that is of the people, by the people and FOR THE PEOPLE. Not for banks. Not for millionaires. Not for well-connected corporate executives. And while I understand that compromise is part of the negotiating process, surrender is not. We cannot surrender the needs of working families for the sake of moving the process forward.

We have seen that the Senate does not fight for working and middle-class families – during this pandemic, they have not changed. It is up to Members of the House to be the safeguard for the American people. The American people elected us to be their voice in Washington, not to work for the powerful few.

Sincerely,